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SIPDIS

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POSTS FOR PAO

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SUBJECT: MISSION OUTREACH DURING RAMADAN

REF: A) THE HAGUE 2870; B) THE HAGUE 3084

1. (U) Summary: Embassy staff participated in 19 outreach events during Ramadan this year, including hosting mission's first-ever Iftar dinner, attending small Iftar gatherings hosted by Muslim families in Amsterdam, participating in the country's first nationwide Ramadan festival, and hosting an international visitor from the Council on Islamic Education who conducted a series of workshops on religion and democracy. Mission participation went beyond public diplomacy staff and included political section, Foreign Commercial Service, economic section, the delegation to the Organization for the Prevention of Chemical Weapons, Consulate General in Amsterdam, and front office staff. In addition, political officer assigned to cover Muslim issues held 13 separate meetings with Muslim representatives during the month-long festival. End Summary.

BREAKING BREAD

2. (U) Mission staff attended large banquets and small family dinners. The Charge's Iftar dinner for 45 key contacts included many Muslim ambassadors and local Muslim leaders. Highlights were broadcast on a local Muslim television station. Mission staff attended five other Iftar dinners hosted by Muslim families, and participated in the country's first national Ramadan Festival - itself organized by Ahmed Larouz, a 2005 IVLP participant. Emboffs shared IIP' Muslim Life in America booklet at family Iftar dinners.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

3. (U) American speakers added their perspectives to the Dutch discussion on integration and religion. Dr. Kamran Ali, an American Fulbright scholar at the University of Leiden's International Institute for the Study of Islam in the Modern World (ISIM), lectured at the university about multiculturalism. Visiting American speaker Shabbir Mansuri of the California-based Council on Islamic Education addressed Dutch-Moroccan students and young leaders in four workshops on Religion and Citizenship in a Democracy. The Charge hosted a dinner for Dr. Jessica Stern, Professor of Public Policy at Harvard and author of Terrorism in the Name of God, who discussed radicalization in the Netherlands with dinner guests including national and local government officials, and academics.

WHAT WE HEARD

4. (SBU) Emboffs heard repeatedly that ethnic tensions in The Netherlands are much worse now than they have ever been. A Moroccan-born Dutch national who works for the City of Amsterdam, in attendance at an Iftar dinner, told emboff that he was considering moving to Spain. His rationale was that, even though the situation in Spain was not better for Moroccans, at least there he would truly be a foreigner. Even though we tell people in Holland that we are Moroccan, we really are Dutch. We never say it though. They [native Dutch] would look at us weird if we did, said the official.

5. (SBU) Views of the US vary based on personal experience and views of larger political events. On the personal level, though some parents may have a favorable view of the US stemming from fond memories of US assistance during their youth in Morocco, Moroccan youth in the Netherlands lack similar positive experiences of the U.S., and according to one observer, many parents don't share their experiences with their children. On the other hand, one middle-aged Dutch Moroccan man said, What happened with relations between the U.S. and the Arab world? Things used to be so good. Why are U.S. policies against us now?

COMMENT

6. (U) The broad array of events provided an excellent opportunity to listen and to bring our message of tolerance to various Muslim audiences. Our embassy-hosted events also

brought Dutch government officials and Muslim leaders together, something both sides have complained does not happen enough. The publication on Muslim Life in America was well-received, and an eye-opener for people who knew nothing of that aspect of the American experience. Commenting on the Embassy's Iftar, Mohammed Sini, Director of the Islam and Citizenship Foundation said Every gathering presents an opportunity to solve problems between Muslims, Christians, Jews and others. They all have to find a way to keep talking to each other. Embassy will continue to foster that discussion.

BLAKEMAN